



*HHC and
The Storm:*
**Rising
To The
Occasion**

Great institutions rise to the occasion — they do not stumble or fall when challenged. Since October 29, HHC employees have been heroic, individually and as a collective team. In every way, they have helped us to rise. They make HHC great.

Alan D. Aviles

President and CEO

New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**

Dear Fellow Employee,

Days before the storm and continuing for almost three weeks, HHC leadership from every facility and Central Office division met in a massive conference call twice a day. We discussed the state of each of our areas, the issues and emergencies that threatened our ability to provide care, and the work we were undertaking to bring back HHC.

We also talked about the extraordinary performance of staff. We talked about the incredible things that you did to keep patients safe, the unyielding commitment to help the frail and vulnerable, the miles that you traveled through wind and rain to make sure you were at your posts, the sleepless hours and exhausting days that you spent at often cold and dark facilities to be with patients, the commitment to caring no matter the setting, the deep bonds of collegiality that emerged, the cold sandwiches and colder coffee, the challenges and the triumphs, the tears that were shed, and the struggles that were overcome.

The hurricane highlighted again the resilience, dedication, ingenuity, and courage of HHC employees. Even while facing the most destructive storm in the city's history, you managed the unexpected, protected our home away from home, and sustained the medical lifeline that is HHC for so many New Yorkers. We have never felt a greater need to recognize your steadfast commitment to this healthcare system we are all privileged to represent.

The following stories exemplify that commitment. They illustrate the courage and sacrifice demonstrated by all staff across HHC, as nothing can encompass all of the individual deeds taken on by our staff. To us, the hurricane reaffirmed what we already knew -- every member of the HHC family is a hero. Without you, there is no public healthcare in this city, and it is because each and every one of you proudly embodies our mission that we are HHC.

Thank you for your exceptional service.

Sincerely,

Alan D. Aviles
Antonio Martin
Ernest J. Baptiste
LaRay Brown
Chris Constantino
Lynda D. Curtis
Ann Frisch
Mendel Hagler
Robert K. Hughes
Iris Jimenez-Hernandez

Caroline M. Jacobs
Tamiru Mammo
Ana Marengo
Angelo Mascia
Joanna Omi
George Proctor
Bert Robles
Salvatore J. Russo
Arnold Saperstein
Joe Schick

Denise C. Soares
Ann Marie Sullivan
Michael Tartaglia
Arthur Wagner
William P. Walsh
Meryl Weinberg
Ross Wilson
Julius Wool
Marlene Zurack

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Monserrate Nieves-Martinez

Associate Director, Hospitals, Coler-Goldwater Specialty Hospital and Nursing Facility

Monserrate “Monsey” Nieves-Martinez was helping out with dinner logistics in Coler’s kitchen when she got the call. “Monsey, we need you upstairs,” her colleague said over the phone. “We got the orders. We have to go.”

The storm had knocked out Coler’s power and heat, and 84 medically fragile patients were being evacuated to Goldwater. With no elevator service, employees had their work cut out for them, carefully maneuvering bed-bound, quadriplegic, and dementia patients down five dark, narrow flights of stairs.

Armed with two flashlights and her daughter’s rain boots, Martinez guided FEMA/EMS paramedics as

they carried physically fragile and chronically disabled residents in wheelchairs and flatbeds. Martinez also served as a cheerleader and a comforting voice to the patients who have known her for years. “We are a family here,” Martinez says. “We know and love our patients.”

While assisting with the evacuation, Martinez faced an emergency of her own – a tooth infection so bad that dentists at Coler insisted on immediate oral surgery. But to Martinez, who has been a part of HHC’s family for 25 years, the surgery had to wait. “It was not even a question,” she says. “Residents come first.”

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Jeannette Rosario

Director, Patient Relations, Coler-Goldwater Specialty Hospital and Nursing Facility

For the employees at Coler, it was not enough to see that the evacuated residents made it down to the ambulances that would take them to Goldwater Hospital across Roosevelt Island.

Jeannette Rosario wanted to ensure that her patients were safely delivered to the other facility, even if it meant forgoing sleep for 24 hours and being outdoors in the midst of the storm.

Wrapping patients up in blankets to shield them from the rain and cold, Rosario jumped into ambulances with the evacuees and made several trips back and forth between the facilities. Rosario did everything she could to make patients feel safe and comfortable during the evacuation. "I didn't have time to be scared," she says.

Decades of experience in long term care prepared Rosario for meeting patients' needs even while facing a threat as large as Hurricane Sandy. While evacuating residents out of the facility, Rosario even remembered to grab small but essential personal items, like dentures, for her patients.

The evacuation took 14 hours but all of Coler's 84 medically fragile residents safely arrived at Goldwater. "When people put their trust in you," says Rosario, "You have to see them through all the way."

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Eva Cooper, RN, Dawn Mellish, MD, Hyacinth Charles, RN

Ambulatory Care, Park Slope Armory Special Needs Medical Shelter

Before any patients got to the Special Needs Medical Shelter at the Park Slope Armory, Hyacinth Charles and Eva Cooper of Kings County Hospital were on site to set up the space. Together, they divided the big open armory into different sections and units for assessment and treatment. Charles and Cooper also put out all the cots and blankets – and this was just the beginning of their work at the shelter.

Once the storm came, patients began to arrive from four different adult homes and nursing homes. Charles and Cooper worked more than 24 hours straight to provide intake and medical stabilization

to the evacuees. In just an hour and a half, the shelter took in more than 300 patients.

Under the clinical leadership of Dr. Dawn Mellish, Chief of Ambulatory Care at Kings County, the shelter met the healthcare needs of more than 560 evacuees and some community members. As essential parts of the shelter's core team, Charles and Cooper stayed at the shelter for four consecutive days. "There wasn't too much down time," says Charles. "With 500 patients at the shelter, it wasn't really possible to take a nap."

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Frank Omotade

Field Nurse, Health and Home Care

Care at HHC does not always happen within the walls of its facilities -- many patients rely on home visits for their medical care. When the citywide fuel shortage caused by Hurricane Sandy threatened the continuity of care for HHC's Health and Home Care patients, dedicated field nurses spent hours waiting on line at gas stations.

Many of Frank Omotade's patients depend on him for insulin injections and oxygen treatments. Worried that he wouldn't see his patients if he didn't get gas, Omotade spent 22 hours waiting and sleeping in his car in order to fill up his tank.

Many patients were moved by his commitment to finding a way to see them. "It meant so much to the patients and they were able to get the care they needed," Omotade says.

For Omotade, spending the night in his car so he could get to his patients is not a praiseworthy act but merely a part of his job as a field nurse. "I think people were surprised that I got to them," says Omotade, "But for me, there's no question: I have to see my patients no matter what it takes."

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Philbert Grange, Carteal McClean, Donna Hanson, Lloyd Austin, Lamar Crockett

Food and Nutrition Services Department, Kings County Hospital Center

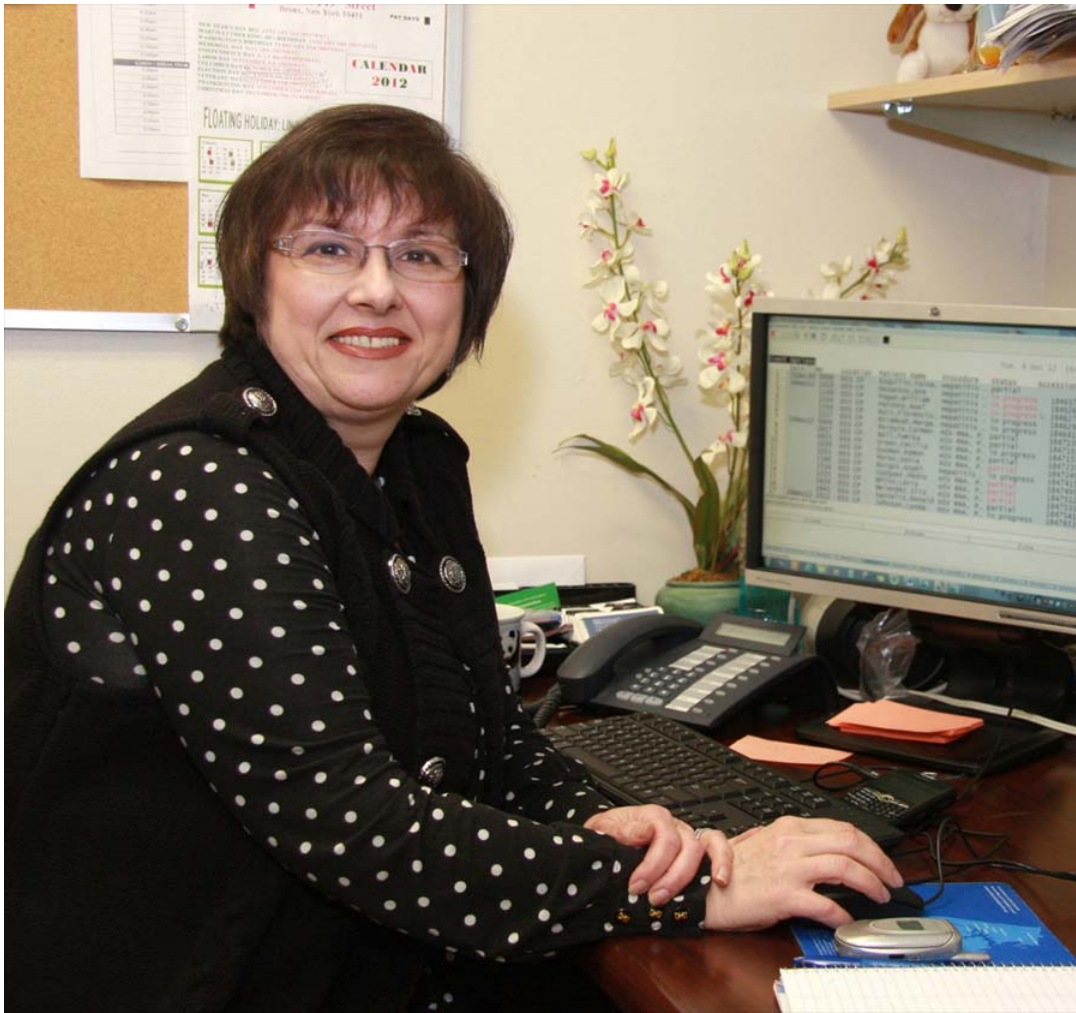
The week of the storm, Kings County's Food and Nutrition Services ran a tight operation in the kitchen. They fed every patient, including evacuees, and provided 1,200 daily meals for all staff, many of whom worked extended tours of duty.

Numerous food and nutrition employees stayed overnight and some managers worked consecutive shifts. "Some employees walked miles to get here," says Donna Hanson, the hospital's Director of Food

and Nutrition Services. "Others car-pooled, picking up and dropping off colleagues."

Hanson stayed at the hospital for four days straight, ensuring that all emergency supplies were checked, food items were ordered to cover projected needs, and that staffing was planned for continuous coverage. "A wonderful crew turned up every day or stayed over with me to ensure that we could continue to care for our patients," says Hanson.

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Sima Bruk

Director, Systems and Programming, Lincoln Medical and Mental Health Center

The unanticipated closing of Bellevue Hospital Center posed a major challenge for Lincoln Hospital. The hospital's lab specimens are ordinarily transmitted electronically and processed at the Bellevue Lab. Once the lab closed, Lincoln had to quickly reroute its specimens elsewhere to provide seamless service to patients.

Lab staff also experienced increased workload as more specimens were being processed in-house. Sima Bruk took on the tedious job of reconfiguring the database of procedures consisting of common lab

tests ordered in high volume, a project that significantly eased the burden of the lab staff. The database reconfiguration required full concentration and careful testing. For four straight days, Bruk worked with Harlem's and Lincoln's lab directors and the external reference lab, maintaining the processing of results for HHC patients without major disruptions. "Not too many people understand what we do," Bruk says. "We do whatever is necessary to keep Lincoln online and functioning."

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Glensford Brooks

Executive Secretary, Kings County Hospital Center

Glensford Brooks began preparing Kings County Hospital for the storm well in advance. He painstakingly checked all of the available rooms in the facility's T-Building to ensure they were habitable for clinicians who would stay at the hospital for days after the storm.

In addition to securing sleeping quarters for employees, Brooks also made sure that no one worked long hours with an empty stomach. By partnering with the facility's Food and Nutrition Services, Brooks coordinated the daily delivery of breakfast, lunch, and dinner to employees from Kings, Coney Island Hospital, and two-off site

locations. "My main objective was to provide food and lodging for our staff, so that they would be ready and able to take care of our number one priority -- our patients," says Brooks.

Brooks embraced the all-hands-on-deck mentality during the storm and slept at Kings for several days, ready to step in wherever he was needed. "What I did during Hurricane Sandy was triggered by something taught to me long ago by my brother Ornel, who is my idol," says Brooks, "Be good to others, especially when they need you most."

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Richard Bernstock

Network Senior Associate Director, North Bronx Healthcare Network

Site Administrative Leader, Lehman College Special Medical Needs Shelter

Most patients who were brought to the Special Medical Needs Shelter at Lehman College arrived from evacuated adult homes and devastated communities with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Many patients had chronic medical and behavioral health conditions, keeping Jacobi and North Central Bronx staff busy as they cared for more than 200 patients.

But patients and HHC staff weren't the only people at the shelter. Numerous government agencies, special medical assistance teams, volunteers, and community organizations were also there to offer their help and resources. Richard Bernstock (center) coordinated with these various groups and handled logistical and administrative issues to keep the shelter running smoothly for all 23 days of its operation. "Individuals rose to the occasion on all sides," he says.

The shelter at Lehman College was the only medical shelter to provide its patients with three hot meals every day. Bernstock credits this perk to the strong ties between Lehman College and HHC, a relationship he fostered since his involvement setting up Lehman's emergency shelter during Hurricane Irene. Bernstock's work at the shelter exemplifies what it means to be an administrative leader who reacts quickly and communicates effectively during an emergency situation. "I feel strongly that our work at the shelter represents HHC and our public health mission at its best — caring for the most vulnerable at a time when they need it most," says Bernstock. "I identify with the mission; I can't imagine doing anything more valuable."

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Ambulatory Care Team

Lincoln Medical and Mental Health Center

With the storm looming, Lincoln Hospital's ambulatory care staff mobilized to call patients to reschedule their appointments and remind them to stay safe. Clerks, coordinating managers, and administrative staff worked together to reach more than 5,400 patients.

"I was deeply impressed with those individuals who were dealing with difficult personal and family demands and yet, were determined to put personal struggles on hold and make room for their responsibilities to our patients," says Charmaine Thomas, Associate Executive Director of Clinical Operations at Lincoln.

When patients walked into the clinic in the midst of the hurricane, the staff was present to receive them and assist with the daily operations of the Ambulatory Care Department. When they were needed in the inpatient units, ambulatory care employees also volunteered to stay overnight to help care for patients who required around the clock watch. Other staff members stayed overnight to make sure they were available the following day.

"I was touched by the staff's enthusiasm about working together and helping one another," says Misty Topping-Reid, Ambulatory Care Assistant Director. "The spirit of teamwork truly demonstrated that together everyone can achieve more."

Front Row, from left to right:

Sonia Torres – Clerical Associate
Sheba Perry - Assistant Coordinating Manager
Gertrude Torres - Assistant Coordinating Manager
Angela Toro - Clerical Associate
Elizabeth Diaz - Clerical Associate
Charmaine Thomas – Associate Executive Director

Back Row, from left to right:

Debby Morel - Clerical Associate
Wendy Martinez - Clerical Associate
Joseph Ortiz - Clerical Associate
Yohani Cruz - Clerical Associate
William Hicks – Deputy Executive Director
Misty Topping-Reid – Assistant Director
Deborah Callender - Clerical Associate
Betty Gomez - Clerical Associate
Jessica Sanchez - Clerical Associate
Ramiro Caceres - Clerical Associate
Jesus Algarin - Clerical Associate

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Jimmy Stewart

Supervisor, Mechanics, Coler-Goldwater Specialty Hospital and Nursing Facility

When floodwaters destroyed the electric panels at Coler, leaving it without electricity, heat, and hot water for three days, Jimmy Stewart mobilized his team and did not rest until essential systems were restored. "I deal with emergencies all the time but nothing of this scale," says Stewart.

Stewart watched part of his facility fill up with water and anxiously waited for it to recede to begin repairs. He then logged about 250 hours of work in the span of two weeks, getting whatever sleep he could on an old couch in his office.

"The whole thing feels like one long day," says Stewart, who has worked for HHC for nearly 25 years.

Under Stewart's direction, Coler averted a potential catastrophe in a flooded basement where a utility company failed to properly shut off the power. His staff came up with a strategy to safely pump out the water before it became a problem. "I give all credit to the people on my team, who are really dedicated," he says. "I believe they are responsible for preventing a full evacuation of our facility during the storm."

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Mavis Thomas, RN, Tara T. Edwards, RN, Patricia Glasgow, RN

Nursing, Kings County Hospital Center and Coney Island Hospital

In preparation for the storm, Kings County Hospital got its inpatient disaster unit up and running in just six hours. Mavis Thomas, who is a part of the hospital's disaster preparedness team, came in the Sunday before to ensure that the unit was ready to accept patients from other facilities once the storm hit.

When the severity of the hurricane became clear, Kings' sister facility, Coney Island Hospital, moved some of its patients to Kings County along with some of its staff. Coney Island nurses had to be trained to use Kings' medical charts and systems, which are

different from those at their home facility. Thomas and Head Nurse Patricia Glasgow from Coney Island worked together to make the transition as smooth as possible for their staff.

Nursing teams from both facilities quickly formed a bond, leaning on each other along the way. "It was a very scary situation but we knew we just had to get it done," says Tara T. Edwards, a Coney Island staff nurse who evacuated from her facility. "If the Kings County and Coney Island nurses didn't come together to care for our patients, who would?"

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Chak-Sin Wong

Watchperson, Gouverneur Healthcare Services

Chak-Sin Wong arrived at his hospital police post at Gouverneur on October 28 and stayed on site through November 5. As the only Chinese-speaking security officer present, Wong was indispensable in managing the facility's reception area during and after the storm.

When Bellevue Hospital Center closed, many patients rushed to Gouverneur, where Wong's knowledge of the facility and warm approach proved instrumental in handling the growing patient volume. His ability to communicate with Chinese patients arriving from the surrounding community

also made it easier to connect them to the right services within the facility.

In addition to meeting community needs, Wong assisted other city agencies that worked around the clock. When a fireman knocked on Gouverneur's doors while working a 12-hour shift, Wong secured the first responder a meal and a hot drink from the kitchen. "I enjoy helping people," he says. "I just do."

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Sander Koyfman, MD, Elizabeth Owen, PhD, Akinola Adebisi, MD

Behavioral Health Services, Park Slope Armory Special Needs Medical Shelter

When Kings County Hospital Center's Behavioral Health Services was asked to assist with providing mental health services for evacuees at the Park Slope Armory Shelter, Dr. Elizabeth Owen, Dr. Sander Koyfman, and Dr. Akinola Adebisi stepped up to provide the critical support.

Dr. Adebisi was at the Armory when a snaking line of school buses brought 400 patients from three private facilities to the shelter. Patients from one nursing home arrived with garbage bags full of soaked

medications, and Dr. Adebisi sorted through all of them and filled prescriptions the patients needed.

Working around the clock for a week, Dr. Owen cared for psychiatric patients and helped set up the office at the shelter. Dr. Koyfman comforted not only the evacuees but also staff members, many of whom were dealing with the aftermath of the storm. "I believe it's important to be a human first and a psychiatrist second," says Dr. Koyfman. "Sometimes people just need basic support."

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



David Baksh

*Associate Executive Director, Operations, Queens Hospital Center
Site Administrative Leader, York College Special Medical Needs Shelter*

By the time Hurricane Sandy approached New York City, Queens Hospital Center staff had turned the gymnasium of the nearby York College Athletic Facility into a small, fully operational hospital. By Tuesday, more than 250 patients arrived at the Special Medical Needs Shelter with a variety of chronic and acute conditions, including those who required oxygen and dialysis.

Under the leadership of David Baksh, Queens Hospital staff worked around the clock for three weeks to provide medical care, supplies, food, housekeeping, security, linen, waste disposal, and many other support services to the shelter. Baksh coordinated with several government agencies and the Federal Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT), a special group of medical professionals

that arrived from Massachusetts to provide assistance.

Despite the challenging situation, shelter residents received exceptional care. More than 60 patients in need of acute treatment were transferred to Queens Hospital's emergency department and received their necessary medications and oxygen. "It was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences that I've had in my healthcare career," says Baksh.

When HHC leadership visited the patients at York College, one evacuee told them the care she received at the shelter was the best care she had ever received in her life. "That was special," says Baksh. "There's no greater reward than that."

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Angela Principato, RN, Kim Spagnola, LPN

Nursing, Stapleton Family Health Center, Mariner's Harbor Family Health Center and Home, Tottenville Special Medical Needs Shelter

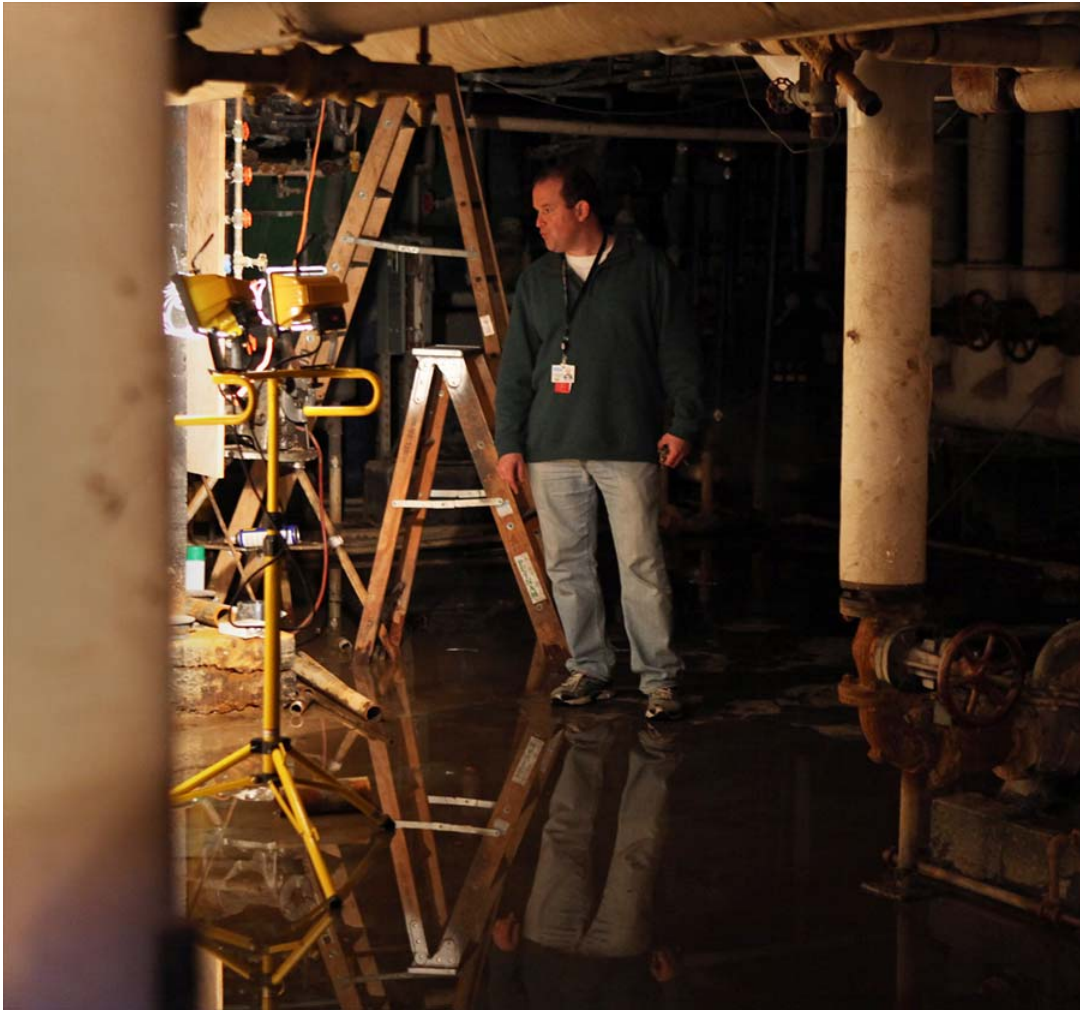
To transform Tottenville High School into a Special Medical Needs Shelter, Angela Principato and Kim Spagnola turned a dean's office into a small pharmacy, divided the classrooms into different patient areas, and prepared a crash cart they hoped they wouldn't have to use.

The evacuees who sought shelter at Tottenville arrived "from all walks of life," says Principato, a nurse at Mariner's Harbor. There were families, patients in wheelchairs, the homeless, and a couple with a premature baby -- released from a hospital just days before the storm hit. Some evacuees also brought their four-legged companions who stayed in a designated pet room.

Throughout the three days and nights Principato and Spagnola staffed the shelter, electricity came and went. Clinicians made rounds of more than 100 patients with the help of flashlights. Principato relied on an army lantern borrowed from her son, who is in the military. "We were busy 24/7," says Principato. "We had cots to sleep on but there wasn't any time for rest."

Spagnola, a nurse at Stapleton, missed her sons at home but didn't mind working at the shelter to care for the evacuees of Staten Island, a borough where she lives and works. "It felt good to help the people of my community," she says.

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Daniel Collins

Director, Facilities Management, Coney Island Hospital

Hurricane Sandy knocked out electrical power at Coney Island Hospital and caused land line and cell phone outages in three of the facility's buildings. The hospital's 10-foot high basement was submerged in floodwater, while more than 200 patients were inside the facility. "We were isolated from any outside assistance," says Daniel Collins. "We were on our own with whatever resources we had on hand."

For Collins and his engineering staff, patient and employee safety was a top priority. Once the power plant flooded, the engineers turned off the backup generator to preserve its stability and systems. They were able to turn it back on once the water receded,

restoring limited power to the Tower Building. Under Collins' leadership, the facilities staff also delivered hundreds of bottles of water to patient care areas and retrieved ventilators from the Main Building.

As water rose in the hospital's parking lots, car alarms were short circuiting, and one car caught fire. Collins' team snaked a water hose from inside the building and out the window to extinguish the car fire. "Mostly, I will remember that the entire staff went above and beyond to protect the facility, its patients, and staff. That's Coney," Collins says.

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Payroll Department

Finance Division, Central Office

Hurricane Sandy turned many things upside down but one routine stayed the same for HHC employees -- the arrival of a paycheck. The massive effort to complete payroll on time involved the collaboration of all HHC facilities and several Central Office departments.

Wielding flashlights, Finance and Corporate Support Services employees spent a day retrieving 1,000 checks from a flooded office building with no power in lower Manhattan. Taking the risk of running out of gas on the way, they then drove the checks to the facilities for distribution. "With so many stops, it was like running a paper route," says Chief Financial Officer Marlene Zurack, who enlisted her husband to help with the driving.

A looming task remained -- processing the next week's bigger payroll of 10,000 checks. Ordinarily, these checks are printed, cut, electronically signed, and prepared for distribution mechanically. With the technology out of order, the staff had to manually process each check. Zurack and Corporate Comptroller Jay Weinman figured out how many people they would need to help, and put out a call for volunteers.

On Election Day, 30 HHC employees -- volunteers from Corporate Planning, Community Health and Intergovernmental Relations, Family Court, Corporate Communications and Marketing, Breakthrough, Patient Safety, Accreditation and Regulatory Services, and Metropolitan and Lincoln hospitals -- gathered around tables at Jacobi and spent hours separating, stamping, sorting, and preparing the checks for delivery. Thanks to their willingness to pitch in and help the Payroll Department, on Wednesday all of the checks arrived on time at the appropriate facilities, ensuring HHC employees were paid for their hard work.

Left to right:

John Yan- Senior Director
Marty Genee- Deputy Corporate Comptroller
Florence Bazo- PAA III
Regina Carey- Coordinating Manager, Level B
Cecil McKenzie- Assistant Coordinating Manager
Anna Cheeseboro- Coordinating Manager, Level A
Meg Burke- PAA III
Judith Moore- Systems Analyst
Karlene Jones- PAA I
Barbara Barnes- PAA III
Enrique Aviles- Service Aide
Not Pictured: Miriam Tolentino- Assistant Coordinating Manager

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Denise Jones, RN

Head Nurse, OB/GYN, Harlem Hospital Center

Denise Jones showed up for work the morning before the storm with a packed bag and ended up staying at Harlem Hospital for three straight days. And when she learned that her staff nurses were eager to report to work but couldn't make it because all public transportation was suspended, Jones got in her car.

Driving as far as the Bronx and New Jersey through high winds and rain, Jones picked up her colleagues on three separate occasions. The transportation runs

were "no problem," she says. "They are my family away from home."

To ensure her nurses didn't get completely worn out the week of the storm, Jones also set up rooms where they could rest at the hospital. She herself provided coverage on both Labor and Delivery and Post Partum units. "To me, it was just like any other work week," says Jones. "Well, maybe a little more complicated."

HHC and The Storm: **Rising To The Occasion**



Abelardo DeAnda, Jr., MD, Leora B. Balsam, MD

Surgeons, Bellevue Hospital Center

After Bellevue Hospital successfully evacuated more than 700 patients, only a man in his late thirties with a serious heart condition remained. Before the storm, cardiologists inserted a ventricular-assist device into his chest to correct a life-threatening heart blockage. The doctors would have to remove the device and close up the patient's chest before he could safely leave the hospital.

Crippled by flooding and loss of electricity, Bellevue was enclosed in darkness but there was no time to wait. The device that was keeping the man alive was running on battery power. Relying on a functioning backup generator, Dr. Abelardo DeAnda, Dr. Leora Balsam, and their operating room staff got to work. Bringing a bit of life to an operating arena, they set up a pristine operating theater, enabling the surgeons to remove the device from the patient's chest.

The team kept watch on the patient, who after receiving exceptional post-operative care, was loaded on a lone functioning elevator and transferred to an ICU bed at another facility.

Dr. DeAnda, Clinical Chief, Cardiothoracic Surgery, says the team of about 15 people that saw the patient through his surgery and transfer should be commended for this immense effort. "They considered all the risks, traveled with the patient in the ambulance, held the intravenous fluids, clung to a packet of medical record information, escorted family members, and carried the patient's personal property along with a five-day supply of medication," he says. "The transfer went so smoothly that the receiving hospital, which was bracing for the worst, called the next day to congratulate everyone who had participated for a job well done."